

REMARKS

Claims 2, 4-9, 11-20, 22-25 and 27-34 are now pending in this application after cancellation of claims 1, 3, 10, 21 and 26.

Among claims 1-34 addressed by the Examiner in the Office Action, claims 2, 16, 17, 32 and 33 were rejected only on the grounds of provisional double patenting in view of the claims of copending U.S. patent application 11/503,215, and remaining claims were rejected based on various prior art references.

In order to overcome the provisional double patenting rejection, Applicants have made the following amendments to claims 2, 16, 17, 32 and 33:

a) claim 2 has been amended to be in independent form and include the features of claims 1 and 10, as well as the feature that “when the focal length is varied, the aperture stop is moved with the second lens group”;

b) claim 16 has been amended to be in independent form and include the features of claims 1 and 10, as well as the feature that “when the focal length is varied, the aperture stop is moved with the second lens group”;

c) claim 17 has been amended to be in independent form and include the features of claims 1 and 10, as well as the feature that “when the focal length is varied, the aperture stop is moved with the second lens group”;

d) claim 32 has been amended to be in independent form and include the features of claims 21 and 26, as well as the feature that “when the focal length is varied, the aperture stop is moved with the second lens group”; and

e) claim 33 has been amended to be in independent form and include the features of claims 21 and 26, as well as the feature that “when the focal length is varied, the aperture stop is moved with the second lens group.”

In view of the above-noted amendments, Applicants submit that independent claims 2, 16, 17, 32 and 33 are patentably distinguishable over the claims of copending U.S. patent application 11/503,215. Since the double patenting rejection has been overcome, claims 2, 16, 17, 32 and 33 are now in allowable condition.

Among the claims rejected based on various prior art references, claims 1, 3, 10, 21 and 26 have been canceled. In addition, amendments have been made so that all remaining claims 4-9, 11-15, 18-20, 22-25, 27-31 and 34 now depend on allowable claim 2, 16, 17, 32 or 33.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are in allowable condition.

Respectfully submitted,

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